

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Art of HOPE

Providing Mental and Emotional Healing to Syrian Refugee Children Through Arts and Fashion  
New York, United States - July 6, 2016

In 2014, only three years into the Syrian conflict, UNICEF reported that “Syria is now one of the most dangerous places on earth to be a child.” Today, 5 million Syrians are taking refuge all across the Middle East while others, including many Syrian children, continue to risk their lives for a chance to reach Europe’s shores. As the crisis grows in its 6th year, nearly half of the war-torn country is displaced. According to the United Nations, children make up almost half of the refugee and internally displaced population with 40 percent of them under the age of 11 forcing the world to continue witnessing the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.

*“Imagine if 170 million refugees decided to walk into the U.S., that’s what happened to Lebanon.”*

**Lebanon’s Education Minister, Elias Bou Saab**

*“We Are Failing the Children of Syria and Lebanon. This Tragedy is Avoidable.”*

**Gordon Brown, Former British Prime Minister**

In an effort to alleviate some of the stress, trauma, and psychological burden forced upon Syrian refugees in particular women and children international journalist, Tara Kangarlou, founded “Art of Hope”, a nonprofit, nongovernmental, 501(c)3 charitable organization based in New York City that aims to provide art therapy workshops for Syrian refugee children in the areas of painting, arts, and handicraft, while training adult women/teens in sewing and fashion design. The first project is set to launch in Lebanon’s Beqaa valley.



*“Mental and psychological health issues are all life encompassing and most psychiatrists and psychologists work in the private sector centralized within the capital Beirut, thus the most vulnerable population, including Syrian refugees cannot access or simply cannot afford these services.”*

**Zeinab Hijazi, Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Consultant**

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After years of reporting and producing for large American news organizations, Ms. Kangarlou is putting all her expertise from reporting and producing in the field into **Art of Hope**.

Serendipitously, on International Women's Day she connected with Lisa Mayer, CEO of **My Social Canvas** who decided to support the **Art of Hope** through her fashion-forward platform that aims to empower women and teens.

Art of Hope's collaboration with My Social Canvas aims to create a sustainable resource foundation that will help fund the non-profit's programs on the ground while promoting the creativity of these women and children through fashionable merchandise all inspired by the refugee's art work that are sold on MySocialCanvas.com.

*"The biggest advantage is that art can express things that are not expressible verbally." Dr. Sarah Deaver, President of the American Art Therapy Association, explains. "That's a huge advantage for people who don't have the language to talk about what's inside of them."*

**Art of Hope** aims to engage children in activities during the time when they're facing the harsh reality of staying behind with no opportunity of a formal and informal education. In addition, by engaging mothers and adult girls in vocational training programs the organization aims to bring back a sense of self-worth, dignity, and normalcy that in the long-term will help them have a smoother journey overcoming the harsh realities of living life as survivors of war whether in a host country or back home in Syria. Based on the desperate need for help in Lebanon Art of Hope's first project will be launched in the Lebanon/Syria border region with the aim of growing the project into other parts of the Middle East and Europe that are currently struggling with a large influx of refugees.

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### About the Founder:

**Tara Kangarlou** is an award-winning journalist who has reported and produced breaking news stories, investigative pieces, and magazine-style print and broadcast stories on both domestic and international issues. Over the years she has written, reported, and produced for CNN, CNN International, NBC Los Angeles, Al Jazeera America, Huffington Post and Al Monitor.

As a multimedia journalist, Ms. Kangarlou has reported from the United States and around the world including Canada, Europe, and the Middle East. In 2015, she led Al Jazeera America's unprecedented access to report and produce from Iran during the historic nuclear negotiations. Throughout the years, she has interviewed many high-ranking politicians, heads of states, and senior government officials from the US and around the world.



In the recent years, she has spent much time in conflict zones and in the Syrian borders in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, where she witnessed the Syrian conflict first hand. Having spent time on the ground and witnessing the issues that impact the Syrian people, those in the host countries, and the region, Ms. Kangarlou decided to move beyond storytelling and reporting on the issues but to take action to have direct impact on those affected by this crisis.

In 2016, she founded the **Art of Hope** a non-profit, non-governmental, 501(c)3 charitable organization that aspires to provide alternative education and vocational training to Syrian refugees through the arts.

Ms. Kangarlou was born and raised in Tehran, Iran and moved to California with her family in 2003. As a journalist and philanthropist she aspires to objectively and openly report and tell the stories that shape, influence, and impact people's lives all over the world. Ms. Kangarlou is a proud graduate of UCLA, B.A. and USC, M.A. and is based in New York City. She is fully bilingual in Farsi and English with moderate conversational knowledge of Arabic, French, and Turkish.